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IN A SOCIETY WHERE MUTANTS AND FORMER MUTANTS ALIKE FEEL THREATENED BY THE WORLD AROUND THEM, THEY TURN TO THEIR FIRST, BEST LINE OF DEFENSE WHENEVER TROUBLE ARISES: X-FACTOR, THE PRIVATE DETECTIVE AGENCY FOUNDED BY MADROX, THE MULTIPLE MAN.

X-FACTOR

WHEN LAST WE LEFT OUR HEROES: EIGHTY YEARS FROM NOW, WHILE THE MUTANT-LOATHING ANTHONY FALCONE IS ON THE LOOSE AND BEEN REVEALED TO BE AN ALLY OF THE TIME-TRAVELING MR. TRYP, MADROX AND LAYLA BROUGHT THE SENILE VICTOR VON DOOM BACK TO ATLANTIC CITY TO SEE IF HE CAN CREATE A DEVICE THAT WILL PULL THE DOOMLOCK-A.K.A. CORTEX-OUT OF THE PAST SO HE CAN STOP MESSING WITH THE TIME LINE.

IN PRESENT DAY, CORTEX HAS BEEN REVEALED TO BE THE WAYWARD DUPE WHO WAS SENT INTO THE FUTURE DURING MESSIAH COMPLEX. HE BATTLES LONGSHOT, SIRYN AND MONET, BEATS UP ON A COUPLE OF THEM AND THEN WINDS UP GETTING AWAY SO THAT HE CAN CONFRONT AND KILL LENORE (THUS WIPING HECAT'E OUT OF THE FUTURE.) BUT CORTEX IS ASTOUNDED TO FIND HIMSELF FACE TO FACE WITH GUIDO, RICTOR AND SHATTERSTAR, THE LATTER OF WHOM CUTS OFF CORTEX'S ARM. WE'RE ABOUT TO FIND OUT HOW THEY WOUND UP BACK IN DETROIT CONSIDERING THAT THE LAST WE HEARD OF THEM, THEY WERE IN NEW ENGLAND.

MEANWHILE, MARVEL ANNOUNCED ITS PLAN TO RESTART X-FACTOR WITH 200, PETER'S DAUGHTER CAROLINE IS STARTING 1ST GRADE, HIS DAUGHTER ARIEL IS STARTING COLLEGE, AND PETER IS STARTING TO FEEL LIKE HE IS 200.

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ONE HOUR AGO.
YOU KEEPIN' AN EYE ON 'IM?
HE'S SLEEPING, GUIDO. HE'S NOT GOING TO CAUSE TROUBLE. POOR GUY'S EXHAUSTED.
YEAH, TRYIN' TO KILL PEOPLE REALLY TAKES IT OUTTA YA.
WE'VE BEEN OVER THIS. HE WASN'T IN HIS RIGHT MIND.
HOW DO WE KNOW HIS RIGHT MIND WON'T GO WRONG AGAIN AND HE SHOVES THOSE PIG STICKERS THROUGH US WHILE OUR BACKS ARE TO 'IM?
WE--
HOW?
FINE. I'M WATCHING. HAPPY?
THRILLED. NOT, Y'KNOW, THRILLED LIKE YOU WERE, OBVIOUSLY...
WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?
NOTHIN'.
NO, YOU'VE GOT SOMETHING TO SAY. SAY IT.
AIN'T NONE O'MY BUSINESS.
YOU'RE SKEEVED 'CAUSE 'STAR KISSED ME.
AND YOU WERE KISSIN' BACK.
WHAT IF I WAS?
I JUST... I DIDN'T KNOW.
I MEAN, I THOUGHT...
MADROX SAID THAT YOU AND RAHNE WERE--
WE WERE.

"AND NOW YA SWITCHED SIDES JUST 'CAUSE SHE TOOK OFF?"
"IT DIDN'T HAPPEN OVERNIGHT, GUIDO. BESIDES, SHATTERSTAR AND I WERE INVOLVED LONG BEFORE RAHNE AND I."
"SO YOU ALWAYS BEEN--?"
"YOU HAVE A PROBLEM WITH IT, GUIDO?"
"NO! NO, NO PROBLEM! ABSOLUTELY NO PROBLEM. NO PROBLEM AT--
"OKAY, A SMALL PROBLEM. HAPPY?
"I MEAN, IT'S JUST...YA NEVER SAID."
"YOU NEVER ASKED."
"OH, RIGHT! HOW DO YA SEE THAT CONVERSATION GOIN'?"
"SO I WAS JUST WONDERIN' FOR NO PARTICULAR REASON, IF YA SWING BOTH WAYS?"
N-NO...! I'M STRAIGHT! BUT MY...MY GIRLFRIEND DUMPED ME AND--
WASN'T TALKIN' TO YOU.
WHO ARE YOU GUYS--?
I'M YOUR GUARDIAN ANGEL AND HE'S YOUR FAIRY GODMOTHER.

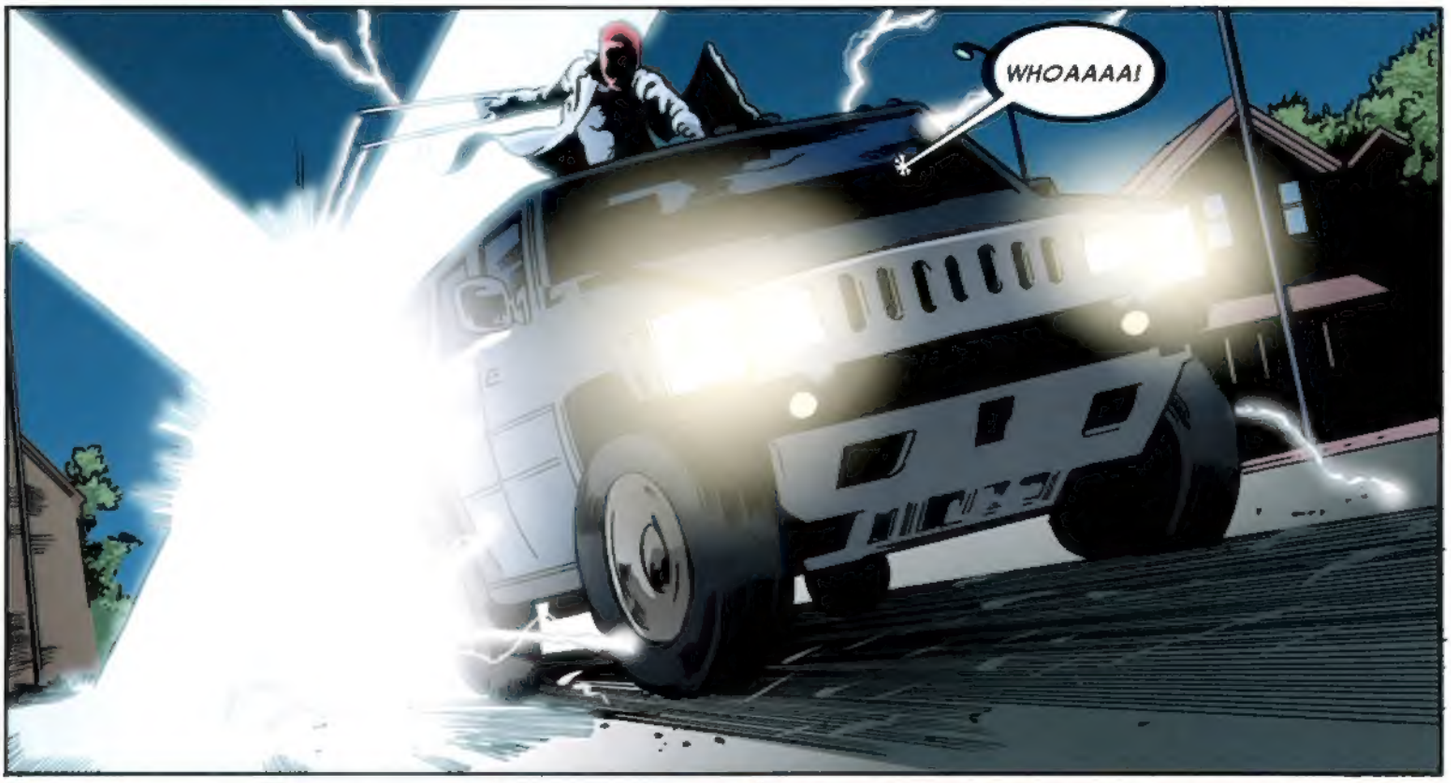
DON'T TRY THIS AGAIN OR WE'LL COME BACK AND KICK YOUR BUTT.
AHHHHHHHH!!!!
OOOOOOOFF!
I...I WON'T! I SWEAR!
WELL, THAT WAS TOTALLY RANDOM.
"FAIRY GODMOTHER"? SERIOUSLY?
IT JUST CAME TO ME.
I BET.
LOOK, WHAT A GUY DOES... WHO HE IS...IT'S HIS BUSINESS.
SO WHY DO YOU CARE WHY I DIDN'T BRING IT UP?
I DUNNO. IT'S...I DUNNO, RIC, OKAY?
SO YOU DOUBLE YER CHANCES ON DATE NIGHTS, YIPPEE. AIN'T MY CONCERN.
AND YET YOU SEEM RATHER CONCERNED.
AAAAAAND THE PEANUT GALLERY WEIGHS IN. THOUGHT'CHA WERE SLEEPIN'.

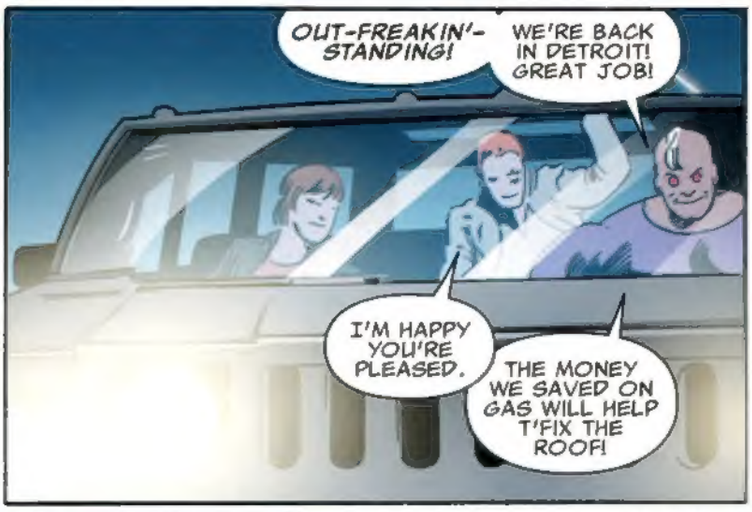
I WAS IN A CONTEMPLATIVE STATE, ACTUALLY.
HOPE IT WASN'T CALIFORNIA. THEY BEEN GIVIN' YOU GUYS A ROUGH TIME LATELY.
WHAT?
IGNORE HIM.
SO IS ANY OF IT CLEARER TO YOU?
NONE, I'M SORRY TO SAY.
I HAD TRAVELED BACK TO MY OWN WORLD, MY OWN TIME, ONLY TO FIND THINGS THERE CHANGED, AND NOT FOR THE BETTER.
VARIOUS THINGS HAPPENED THERE. TOO MUCH TO GO INTO AT THE MOMENT.
GOOD IDEA. SAVE IT FER THE MINISERIES.
HUH?
NOTHIN'. JUST THINKIN' OUT LOUD.
AND THEN I WAS ON MY WAY BACK HERE BECAUSE...
WELL, HONESTLY... BECAUSE OF YOU, RICTOR. I JUST...MY THOUGHTS KEPT RETURNING TO YOU. TO OUR FRIENDSHIP.
IT MEANT A GREAT DEAL TO ME. AND WHILE I WAS TRAVELING BETWEEN REALMS...
...I ENCOUNTERED... SOMETHING. SOMETHING THAT WAS ALSO TRAVELING.
AND ALL I HEARD IN MY HEAD WAS "CORTEX," AND THE NEXT THING I REMEMBER WAS SNAPPING OUT OF IT AFTER FIGHTING YOU.

I'M SORRY IF I HURT YOU IN ANY WAY.
IT'S NO BIG DEAL. DON'T SWEAT IT.
IF I HAD DONE YOU PERMANENT DAMAGE... KILLED YOU, OR WORSE...
"OR WORSE"? WHAT'S *WORSE* THAN *KILLING* HIM?
YEAH, WELL...SEEMS LIKE MY *DAY* FOR SURPRISES...
YOU'D BE SURPRISED.
MAN, THIS IS GONNA BE A *LONG* DRIVE HOME.
YOU WISH TO BE HOME SOONER?
ENVISION HOME. THINK OF HOME. ARE YOU THINKING OF HOME?
UH... SURE, WHY?
IS THIS GONNA BE A WHOLE DOROTHY RIFF, 'CAUSE IF SO, THAT'S A LITTLE TOO ON-THE-NOSE.
SHUT UP, GUIDO. OKAY, STAR, I'M DOING IT.
NOW... OPEN THE SUNROOF.
THIS CAR DOESN'T *HAVE* A SUNROOF.
NOT A PROBLEM.

NO! WAIT--!
AW, MAAAAN!
CHUNK!
CALM DOWN, GUIDO! IT'LL BE FINE.
WE'LL SEE HOW FINE YA THINK IT IS THE FIRST TIME IT RAINS!
ALL RIGHT! JUST KEEP THE CAR GOING, NO MATTER WHAT YOU SEE!
GOOD! 'CAUSE IF I SPOTTED COP LIGHTS BEHIND US, I WAS GONNA FLOOR IT ANYWAY.
JUST STAY STRAIGHT.
AND THE IRONIC PHRASING JUST KEEPS COMIN'.
OKAY, GUIDO, ENOUGH IS--

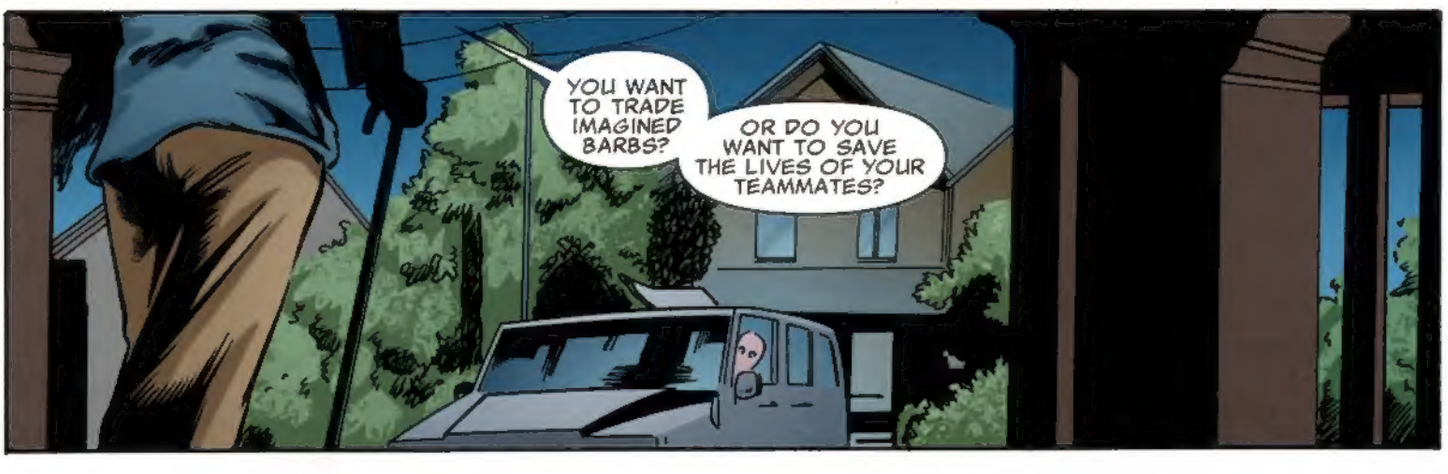
WHAT THE HELL?!
HAS HE EVER DONE THAT BEFORE?
NOT TO MY KNOWLEDGE.
I SAID KEEP GOING!
GUIDO!
YOUR CALL, RIC. DO I TRUST 'IM? YES OR NO?
YEAH. DO IT.
OKAY, THEN...
CLICK YER HEELS THREE TIMES.

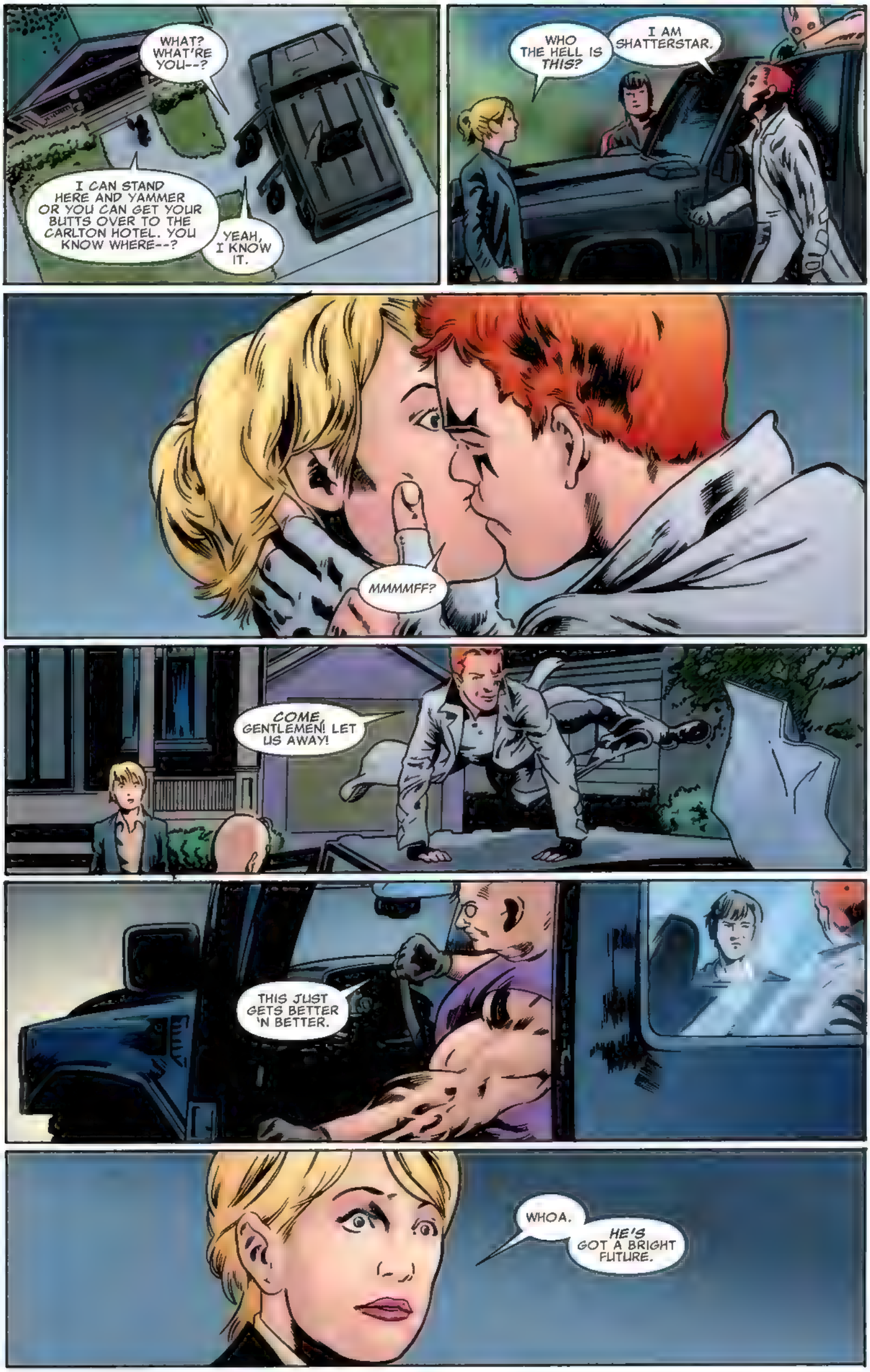

WHOAAAA!


OUT-FREAKIN'-STANDING!
WE'RE BACK IN DETROIT! GREAT JOB!
I'M HAPPY YOU'RE PLEASED.
THE MONEY WE SAVED ON GAS WILL HELP T'FIX THE ROOF!

AND BOOM! WE'RE HOME T'BOOT!

IT'S ABOUT BLOODY TIME!
VAL? DON'T *YOU* HAVE A HOME? AN OFFICE? MAYBE A JOB?


YOU WANT TO TRADE IMAGINED BARBS?
OR DO YOU WANT TO SAVE THE LIVES OF YOUR TEAMMATES?


WHAT? WHAT'RE YOU--?
I CAN STAND HERE AND YAMMER OR YOU CAN GET YOUR BUTTS OVER TO THE CARLTON HOTEL. YOU KNOW WHERE--?
YEAH, I KNOW IT.
WHO THE HELL IS THIS?
I AM SHATTERSTAR.
MMMMFF?
COME, GENTLEMEN! LET US AWAY!
THIS JUST GETS BETTER 'N BETTER.
WHOA.
HE'S GOT A BRIGHT FUTURE.

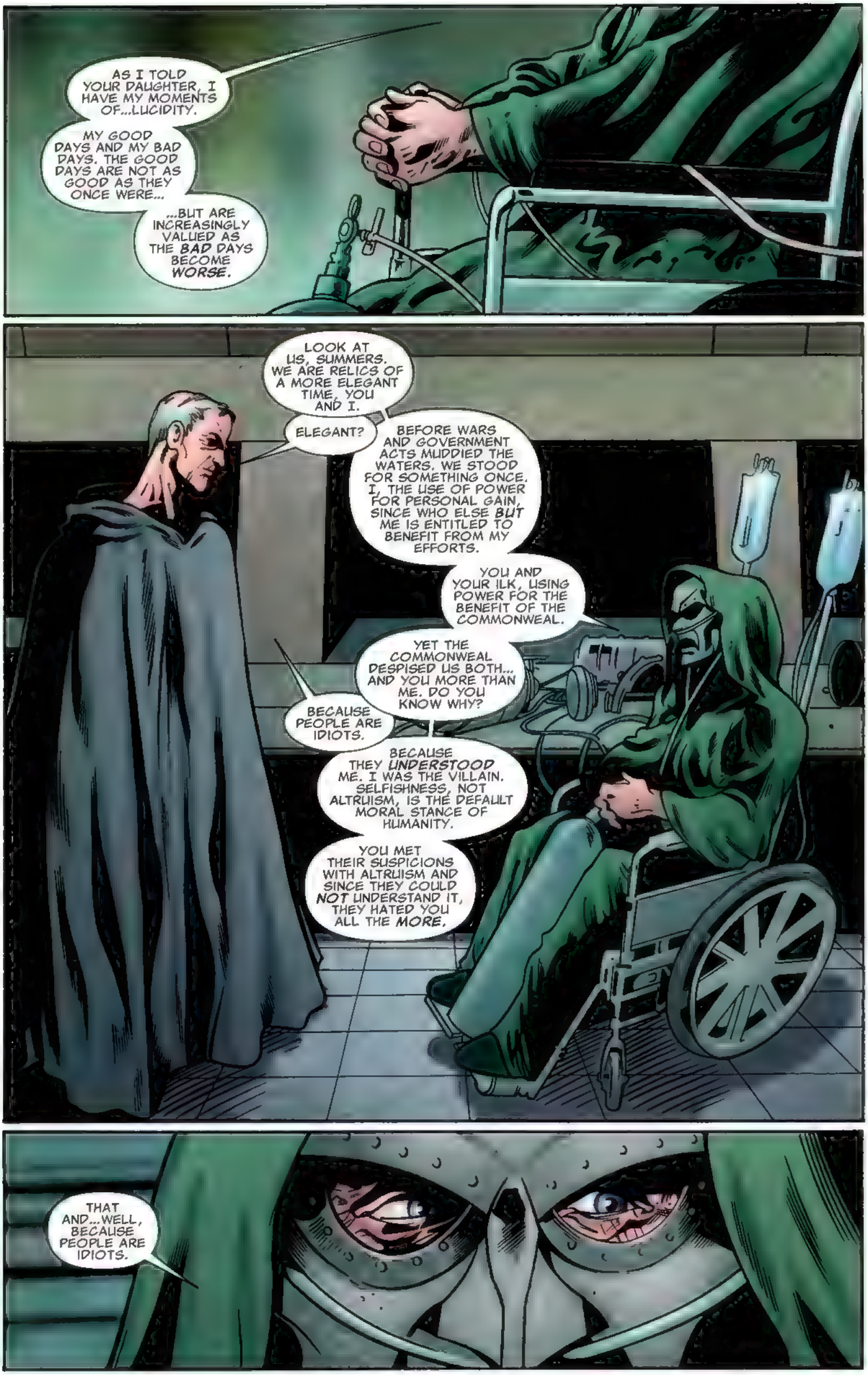
X EIGHTY YEARS FROM NOW...
FOR NO RHYME OR REASON, THE SENTINELS ATTACKED PHILADELPHIA.
WE WERE READY FOR IT BECAUSE LAYLA GAVE US A HEADS-UP.
PRESUMING YOU CAN COUNT "I'M REALLY, REALLY IN THE MOOD FOR A QUALITY CHEESESTEAK" AS A HEADS-UP, BECAUSE THAT'S JUST HOW SHE ROLLS.
I KEEP WONDERING, WHY? WHY ARE THEY HERE? WHAT'S THE END GAME?
RUBY AND THE OTHERS... THEY DON'T CARE. THEY'RE ALL ABOUT SMASHING DOWN SENTINELS WHEREVER THEY POP UP...
...LIKE GIANT ROBOT WHACK-A-MOLES.

AND THEY CELEBRATE EACH VICTORY...
...AND SLAP EACH OTHER ON THE BACK, AND CONGRATULATE THEMSELVES...
...BECAUSE AFTER YEAR UPON YEAR OF BEING UNDER SIEGE...
...THEY'RE SO HAPPY TO BEGIN A DAY BY NOT WAKING UP DEAD...
...THAT THEY DON'T QUESTION ANYTHING ELSE.

BUT AS FOR ME...
...ASKING QUESTIONS IS AN ANNOYING HABIT.
IT'S ALL GOING TO TURN TO CRAP, ISN'T IT. AND SOONER RATHER THAN LATER.
YES.
AND IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN DO TO STOP IT?
NO.
LAYLA...
I'M THE CAUSE OF IT, AREN'T I.
ONE OF THE CAUSES, YES.
LAYLA, MY GOD, WHY DID YOU BRING ME HERE...?
BECAUSE I'M THE OTHER CAUSE.
AND MISERY LOVES COMPANY.

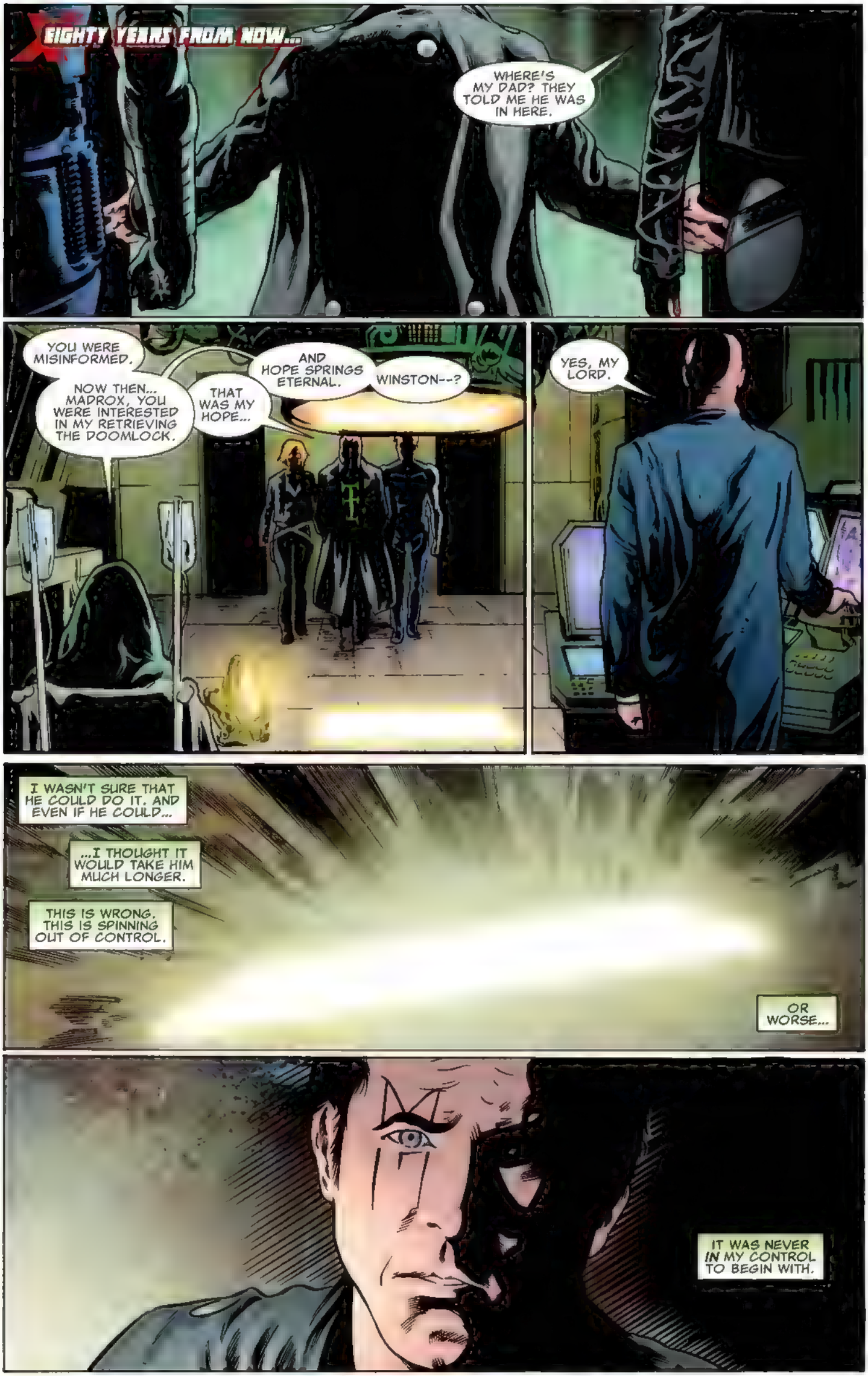
VON DOOM.
AND YOU ARE...?
CYCLOPS.
YOU WISH AN *AUDIENCE* WITH ME, MR. CLOPS?
DON'T CALL ME "MR. CLOPS."
WELL, YOU *ARE* MY INFERIOR. CALLING YOU "SY" WOULD BE INAPPROPRIATELY FAMILIAR.
NO, THAT'S...
NEVER MIND.
MADROX TOLD ME YOU CAN LOCATE THE KEY TO OUR "PROBLEM."

NOT A KEY. A LOCK. A "DOOMLOCK."
THE DEVICE THAT HE SAID YOU CREATED THAT ENABLES PEOPLE TO CHANGE THE PAST...
AND OUR FUTURE. YES.
WHAT I'M WONDERING IS, HOW *COULD* SOMEONE ELSE HAVE GOTTEN ACCESS TO THIS TECH?
WHO ELSE COULD HAVE IT?
DOCTOR FALCONE.
YES.
THE PRESIDENT'S SCIENCE ADVISOR?
AND HOW WOULD *HE* HAVE GOTTEN IT?
I GAVE IT TO HIM.
WHY IN THE HELL DID YOU DO THAT?
BUT--
BECAUSE IT SUITED ME TO DO SO.
THAT IS *NONE* OF YOUR CONCERN, SUMMERS, AND YOU WOULD BE WELL-ADVISED TO MIND YOUR TONE.
"SUMMERS."
YOU DO KNOW ME.
VON DOOM...
...DOCTOR...
WHAT'S GOING ON?


AS I TOLD YOUR DAUGHTER, I HAVE MY MOMENTS OF...LUCIDITY.
MY GOOD DAYS AND MY BAD DAYS. THE GOOD DAYS ARE NOT AS GOOD AS THEY ONCE WERE...
...BUT ARE INCREASINGLY VALUED AS THE BAD DAYS BECOME WORSE.
LOOK AT US, SUMMERS. WE ARE RELICS OF A MORE ELEGANT TIME, YOU AND I.
ELEGANT?
BEFORE WARS AND GOVERNMENT ACTS MUDDIED THE WATERS. WE STOOD FOR SOMETHING ONCE. I, THE USE OF POWER FOR PERSONAL GAIN, SINCE WHO ELSE BUT ME IS ENTITLED TO BENEFIT FROM MY EFFORTS.
YOU AND YOUR ILK, USING POWER FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE COMMONWEAL.
YET THE COMMONWEAL DESPISED US BOTH... AND YOU MORE THAN ME. DO YOU KNOW WHY?
BECAUSE PEOPLE ARE IDIOTS.
BECAUSE THEY UNDERSTOOD ME. I WAS THE VILLAIN. SELFISHNESS, NOT ALTRUISM, IS THE DEFAULT MORAL STANCE OF HUMANITY.
YOU MET THEIR SUSPICIONS WITH ALTRUISM AND SINCE THEY COULD NOT UNDERSTAND IT, THEY HATED YOU ALL THE MORE.
THAT AND...WELL, BECAUSE PEOPLE ARE IDIOTS.

NOW...
THIS IS ABSURD. YOU ARE ALL PROTECTING HER AND YOU DON'T HAVE THE FAINTEST IDEA WHY.
HAS IT OCCURRED TO YOU THAT THERE'S A GOOD REASON FOR HER TO DIE?
I CAN HONESTLY SAY IT NEVER CROSSED MY MIND.
ME NEITHER.
I ACTUALLY HAVE YET TO BE INTRODUCED TO HER, BUT--
WAIT. IT'S.. YOU!
YOU ARE THE ONE WHO TOOK CONTROL OF ME!
YOU ARE THE ONE WHO NEARLY CAUSED ME TO KILL RICTOR!
I'LL CUT YOU TO DEATH BY INCHES FOR THAT!
UH--?
I WANT YOU TO UNDERSTAND THAT THIS HAS BEEN ENTERTAINING. A BIT OF OLD HOME WEEK.
SOME PART OF ME... THE OLD PART... EVEN ADMIRES YOU.
HAS A DEEP FONDNESS FOR YOU.
WANTS TO GIVE YOU A SPORTING CHANCE.
A "SPORTING CHANCE...!?
DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND, RICTOR? I COULD HAVE GONE BACK TO BEFORE YOU WERE BORN
KILLED LENORE'S MOTHER WHILE SHE WAS STILL A CHILD, RENDER IT ALL MOOT.
BUT WHERE'S THE FUN IN THAT? THE CHALLENGE? WHERE IS THE OPPORTUNITY--

BEHIND ME! GET BEHIND ME--
TO ANNIHILATE EVERY DAMNED ONE OF YOU!
YAARRRHH!


EIGHTY YEARS FROM NOW...
WHERE'S MY DAD? THEY TOLD ME HE WAS IN HERE.
YOU WERE MISINFORMED.
NOW THEN... MADROX, YOU WERE INTERESTED IN MY RETRIEVING THE DOOMLOCK.
THAT WAS MY HOPE...
AND HOPE SPRINGS ETERNAL.
WINSTON--?
YES, MY LORD.
I WASN'T SURE THAT HE COULD DO IT. AND EVEN IF HE COULD...
...I THOUGHT IT WOULD TAKE HIM MUCH LONGER.
THIS IS WRONG. THIS IS SPINNING OUT OF CONTROL.
OR WORSE...
IT WAS NEVER IN MY CONTROL TO BEGIN WITH.

GUIDO!
THESE ARE YOUR FINAL DEFENDERS THEN, DEAR? A MUTANT WHOSE POWER IS SAVING HIS OWN SKIN...AND RICTOR, WHO'S GOT NOTHING IN THE TANK?
GO AWAY!!!
WHAT? WHAT IN THE--
WOW.
WHAT ELSE CAN YOU DO?
I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW I COULD DO THAT.

--WORLD?
OH MY GOD.
IT'S...ME! ONE OF MY DUPES!
BUT WHAT THE HELL HAPPENED?
GREETINGS.
I AM VICTOR VON DOOM. I HAVE BROUGHT YOU HERE...
AND I BELIEVE YOU'LL FIND THAT, WHILE IN TRANSITION, MY TECHNOLOGY HAS OVERWRITTEN YOUR COMMAND SYSTEMS.
YOU ARE TAKING ORDERS FROM ME.
NOW...
...SO THAT THEY WILL NOT CONTINUE TO CONFUSE THE COMMONWEAL BY SERVING IT...
...I WOULD BE MOST APPRECIATIVE...
...IF YOU WOULD KILL ALL THE MUTANTS.

NEXT ISSUE

STEAM
& ARTNET
VICTORIAN - DCP